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Spring 2008

## Maine Peace Action Committee Newsletter

Maine Peace Action Committee

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# Maine Peace Action Committee

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Maine Peace Action Committee (MPAC) was founded in 1974 with a special focus on ending the war in Indochina. MPAC has been concerned with our society's violent and militaristic nature, which is manifested in a lack of humane and progressive values and a tendency towards solving problems via destructive means.

Our general orientation takes the double focus of analyzing and opposing militarism, or the efforts to use nuclear weapons and other military means to solve human problems, and imperialism, or the efforts by powerful nations to use economic and military means to impose their will upon less powerful peoples.

Our nation's pursuit of these policies undermines its ability to deal with the needs of its own citizens and places us in greater danger of war. Our tax dollars are used to develop first strike capable weapons and to support repressive regimes abroad. Consequently, there are fewer dollars available for needed human services both here and abroad.

If we direct our energy and other resources into weapons systems, there is little left for creative solutions to problems such as the world food and fuel shortages which threaten our survival.

We have seen human needs are neglected by an existing government, and when that government represses groups attempting to meet those needs, violent upheaval has resulted. Our government's military economic support for such repressive regimes has embroiled us in armed conflicts which have escalated to full scale war and could mean inevitable global destruction.

We support efforts to deal with each of these problems since we see them as resulting and contributing to an economic and political system over which most of us have little control.

We in MPAC believe that while none of these efforts by itself can bring about a completely just society, together we can work toward more comprehensive solutions. We feel that we can best contribute by challenging militarism and imperialism and proposing alternatives to these policies.

We find we can act effectively if we focus on a limited number of specific issues and campaigns. We need projects which can:

1. unite people within our group
2. provide opportunities for action resulting in measurable achievement
3. link our efforts with national campaigns; and
4. demonstrate the dynamics of militarism and imperialism.

For our activities to be successful, we need to educate ourselves about issues, analyze the contributing factors, investigate alternative solutions, decide strategy for implementing alternatives, and share our understanding with the community to enlist their support.

MPAC believes that people united and working together can redefine our values and change our approach to problems so that we shall be able to live in a free and creative society; indeed, such efforts are imperative if we are to survive.

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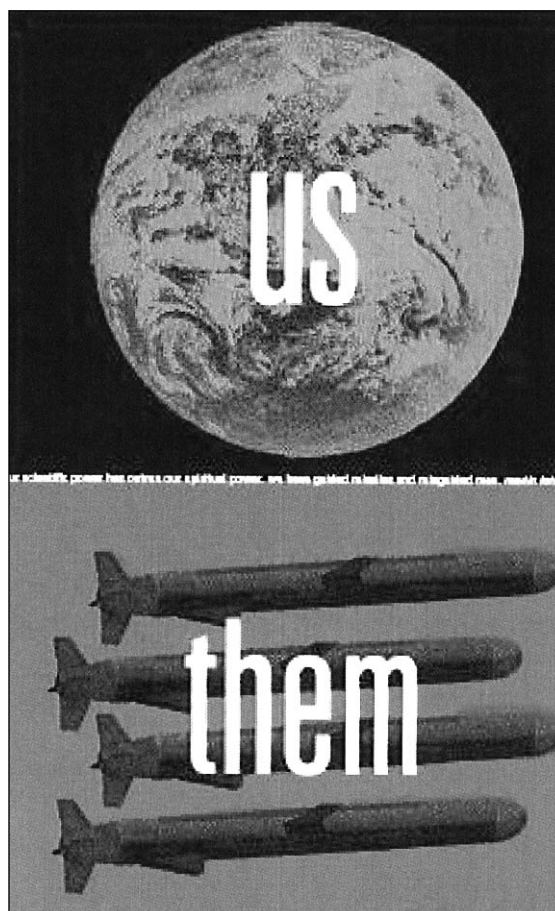
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## IRAQ WAR TEACH-IN

On March 20th of 2008, in a nearly filled to capacity 140 Little Hall, people gathered to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq by taking part in a teach-in at the University of Maine campus. There were four presenters at the teach-in. The first was Professor Alex Grab, a history teacher at the University of Maine who was born in Israel, followed by Brian Clement, a UMaine student and Iraq War veteran. The third presenter was Rick McDowell, an activist with the American Friends Service Committee. The last presenter was Professor Doug Allen, a professor from the Philosophy Department at UMaine and a peace and justice activist.

Professor Grab gave a brief history of the country of Iraq in terms of its origins as a British mandate after World War I through to the present. Professor Grab also devoted some time to talking about Iranian history and the relationship between the various governments of Iran and the United States, detailing the deposing of popular Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh by the U.S. and Great Britain in favor of the western friendly Shah, and finally talking about the Iranian revolution. Professor Grab also described the ethnic and religious make-up of the region and the effect this had on the relationships between Iraq and Iran. One emphasis in Professor Grab's speech was the



discharge. Clement noted "It took me about eight months and the best three grand I've ever spent."

The third speaker was Rick McDowell who is an antiwar activist with the American Friends Service Committee. McDowell has been a part of more than a dozen delegations to Iraq and has spent significant amounts of time with the people

still much more who are leaving Iraq because of the conditions there.

The final speaker was Professor Allen, a longtime peace activist. He shared the general framework that he uses to help critique unjust wars that are fought. He advised to focus on the power relationships between different groups in society as a way to understand the injustices found "and to try and understand that, it's a good idea just to follow the money" he noted, meaning looking at who is making money off of the war, an example being the military industrial complex.

The presentations were followed by a lively question and comment part of the program where many in the crowd asked questions of the panelists and also made comments. One person commented on seeing homeless Vietnamese refugees who were disabled during the Vietnam war on city streets in Thailand decades after the war ended. This led the commenter to reflect on the effect that wars have long after the fighting is over. Other people criticized the lack of care we give to returning veterans who are faced with poor mental and physical health services.

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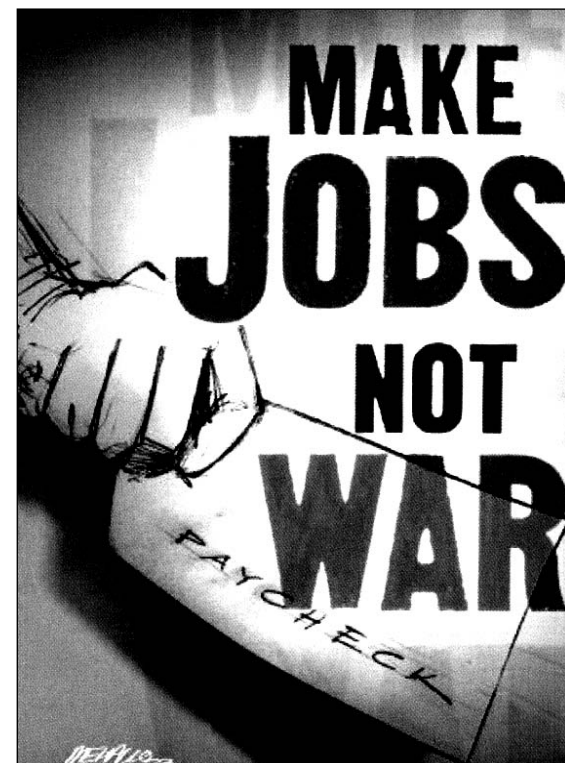
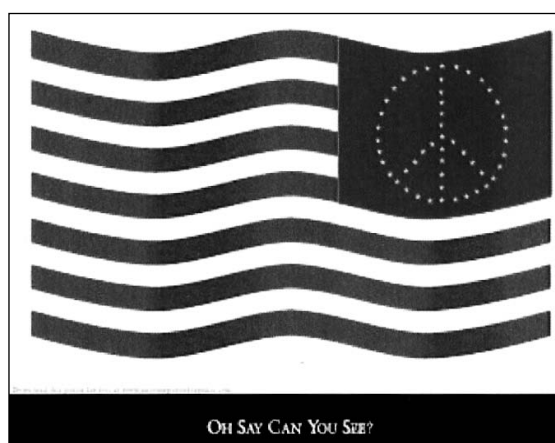
Find audio podcasts and embedded video of the four main talks from the March 20 Teach-In at <http://peacecast.us>.

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involvement that U.S. and other western countries had in the events of Iraq which came before the recent war, such as the U.S.-Iraqi relationship in the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, and the economic sanctions which crippled Iraq for the next decade or so.

The second speaker was UMaine student Brian Clement, a veteran of the Iraq War and a member of Veterans for Peace, as well as the Iraq Veterans Against the War. Clement described his military experiences such as joining the Army after high school, training, and finally his time in Iraq. Clement was a truck driver with the First Cavalry Division who routinely made trips between Kuwait and Baghdad during the violent months of 2004. Clement discussed the dangers of combat he experienced during the times his convoy was attacked as well as the death of a friend. He also noted that a lot of the duties he and his fellow soldiers were given went beyond the training that they had. Clement then discussed his time back from Iraq and his joining of the antiwar movement, which involved a legal battle to get his honorable

of Iraq. McDowell gave some of his impressions of the Iraqi people as well as detailing their opinions on the U.S. occupation. He gave anecdotes about a peace activist in Iraq who was adamant about not leaving even in the face of danger. McDowell revealed that this individual was eventually murdered. Another anecdote was about the effect the war had on Iraqi families, in this case, how a family was broken up after a refugee was denied the chance to live in the United States, while his family was not. Another interesting fact that McDowell presented which contradicts a lot of media reports is that while there are some Iraqi refugees returning to the country, there are



There were also several mentions about the monetary cost of war and the many alternative ways in which this could be spent more usefully. In terms of questions, there were some about what Iraq's future should be, such as the viability of a three state solution. McDowell responded by saying "it's none of our damn business, the Iraqis will determine their own future." Many people concurred, but McDowell and others added that we do owe the Iraqis a lot in the form of aid and reparations, but it is not for us to dictate what their state will look like. One commenter expressed discouragement at the lack of coverage that

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## MAKING ACTIVISM A PART OF YOUR LIFE

I've been thinking quite a bit lately about how to make peace and justice activism a permanent part of my life. This is an issue that many people I know struggle with and an issue that I see as significant to the growth of the peace and justice movement. Because I am going through a major life transition, graduating this year, it's become a much more prominent concern in my life. The questions are, "Will I remain active?" and, "How will I do this?" Everything I have experienced has shown me that activism is a commitment and that thought and reflection are required to make it a permanent part of your life.

It's important that I clarify my current role in terms of working on peace and justice issues. I am by no means a central or catalytic part of the movement. I consider myself a worker, not particularly experienced in activism, but trying to learn from and be helpful to more experienced activists in the community. The bottom line is I don't bring any particular or special skills to the table. I'm just willing to show up and work. My goal is to remain active and hopefully improve my work and effectiveness in peace and justice activism.



opposed opinions openly. For a shy person like me, this is a big hurdle. But... ultimately, I don't feel comfortable with this inaction. Because I want things to change it's really not enough.

The next option involves a life that balances activism, a profession, family, and all the busy work of life. I have already discovered that it's a difficult thing to truly feel involved in a movement while balancing a full load in the rest of my life. And it's not enough to simply cram into my life all the things that I think are important. I also need to remain energized, enthusiastic and hopeful about all aspects of my life, both for my quality of life and my effectiveness as an activist. Honestly, I've struggled with how I

community with some wonderful role models who have allowed me to see what a lifestyle involving acting for change looks like.

I have found that activism is a long-term commitment. And I think many people have a really hard time with this. I did. People without an historical perspective can find it discouraging and demoralizing. When I first got involved I had Hollywood notions of what activism was. In fact, that word, activism, wasn't one that I would have ever considered as a description of something that regular people do. I pictured surging groundswells, spontaneous calls for justice simply because it was right, followed by dramatic victories. And even if this does occur, it's never spontaneous but a product of endless hours (and years for the big and complicated issues) of working and pushing, making small steps, losing ground and then pushing back again.

However, I must say there is palpable power in day-to-day activism, concerning influence, connecting with others, and personal empowerment, but it isn't a glamorous power. If organizing is to be constructive, it should have longevity and create a foundation for future development, influencing those who will come later to keep the movement going. There's true satisfaction in this, if not immediate gratification. Although many of my generation have been raised with the expectation of immediate gratification (fast food, hundreds of TV channels, prepackaged versions of everything), we are becoming more aware of this wasteful cultural disability requiring disposability and moving toward an emphasis on sustainability, including both knowledge of history and thought for future generations, as the only long-term solution. This shift makes a life involving activism more understandable and accessible to those of us who have been unused to things that are not immediate.

Activism is mostly a slow-moving team process. No one person can or should try to take it on alone or fix it all. To sustain a life

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In terms of making peace and justice work a major part of the rest of my life I have observed a couple of paths that regular people, who feel passionately about issues of peace and justice, often choose. The first, and most common, path is one that I know is very easy to fall into. Many a more knowledgeable and passionate activist than I, become simply very informed, with ethical views and wonderful values, who discuss the issues articulately and passionately with friends and others, but never or rarely participates in organizing or direct action. This has been an accurate description of me for much of my life and I understand where it comes from completely.

The fragmentation, busyness and fullness of modern life push us toward this option. Stress, moving, a new job, children, lack of stable communities, in addition to all the little things that add up like registering the car, doctor appointments, keeping up with bills and the like, all make this path of inaction likely and understandable. In addition, there's the fear of being out there, exposed, expressing sometimes strongly

can best accomplish this and no doubt will continue to for the rest of my life. Ultimately, I know that this option involving action is both ethical and achievable.

The question is how do I successfully make this commitment to stay energized and remain involved in the peace and justice movement? Quite simply, I know what keeps me involved: a sense of duty to work to help change what is unjust such as the war in Iraq, the current health care system, and the unethical distribution of wealth in this country and throughout the world. The alternative of letting things remain the way they are, while doing nothing, is just too demoralizing, unacceptable, and unnecessary. The thing is, there is nothing unusual about me at all. I have no great wisdom or extra compassion when compared with the average person who is not active, or is minimally active. I have been that person. I've just been lucky enough to encounter a vital and effective peace and justice



## ACTIVISM

(continued from Page 3)

of activism I need to find reward in the process and the community and friends I make. I must understand that some of the time I will never know what influence I've had, realize that incremental gains are the norm for big issues, and accept that I will fail sometimes.

The thing that keeps me energized is that activism works. It's slow, but it produces results that last because it's a bottom up structure with a solid foundation. Change that comes about through the quick sweep of a powerful entity, though sometimes immediately satisfying and relieving, either isn't that much of a change or it will not be sustainable, and in the worst case will be disastrous. For example, look at the devastating situation in Iraq. On the other hand the women's suffrage movement in this country took over 80 years before women achieved the right to vote, and this was a fairly straightforward issue involving only one government and a concrete law. But look how engrained the results are now, the thought that women were kept from voting as recently as 88 years ago is shocking and unimaginable to an average modern citizen.

One more thing that will help keep me active is the community of people who make up the movement. Keeping from feeling isolated is extremely important in maintaining momentum and hope in all things. Although working with other people can sometimes be frustrating and feel slow, in the end it really keeps things moving along. For example: when I'm tired or busy there are others to pick up the slack, and when they're not able to participate as much I can pick up their slack. The more spread out the power and the work, the stronger the movement becomes as the group is more able to absorb losses and additions of members without significant loss of productivity. The key is that members are reliable, committed, and focused on individual power and accolades.

The last key aspect to staying active, which I have learned through personal experience, is the importance of setting limits and boundaries, resisting the urge to overextend myself. I have learned there is a point at which my ability to contribute peaks, and I begin to expend more energy that I'm taking in. This eventually leads to "burnout" which is debilitating, not only to my effectiveness as an activist, but in all aspects of my life. I may be doing more, but less effectively, and eventually I become resentful. The risk is that I will stop working altogether. Balance is the key to longevity.

Ultimately, anyone can be an activist. Like many people, I have felt both overwhelmed by the issues and inadequate in my ability to change things. This is natural, the issues are overwhelming, and alone, we

## IRAQ WAR TEACH-IN

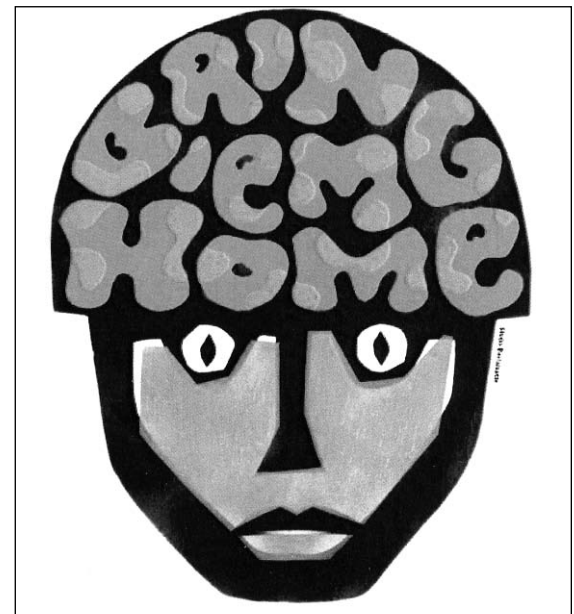
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the Winter Soldier 2008 hearings were getting and asked Brian Clement to comment on the hearings. He noted that he was also somewhat disappointed in the coverage.

Brian was also asked what the feelings of the soldiers in Iraq were about the war, and he noted that there seemed to be some division somewhere between lower and middle-ranked enlistees who seemed to be more against the war as opposed to higher-ranked enlistees and officers who seemed to mostly not question it. Near the end of the discussions several people commented on how important and effective the antiwar movement has been in dealing with the Iraq War. Professor Allen ended on a hopeful note by stating how quickly the antiwar movement had helped to convince people of the injustice of the Iraq War compared to how long it took to do the same during Vietnam.

The teach-in was a major success and showed the continuing commitment of the Maine community to peace and justice issues and ending the war in Iraq. It is just one of the ways that MPAC and other peace and justice groups have found ways to motivate the public, give a place to those with marginalized views, and provide a community for the peace activists that care so much about the future of this country and the world.

—David Wihry



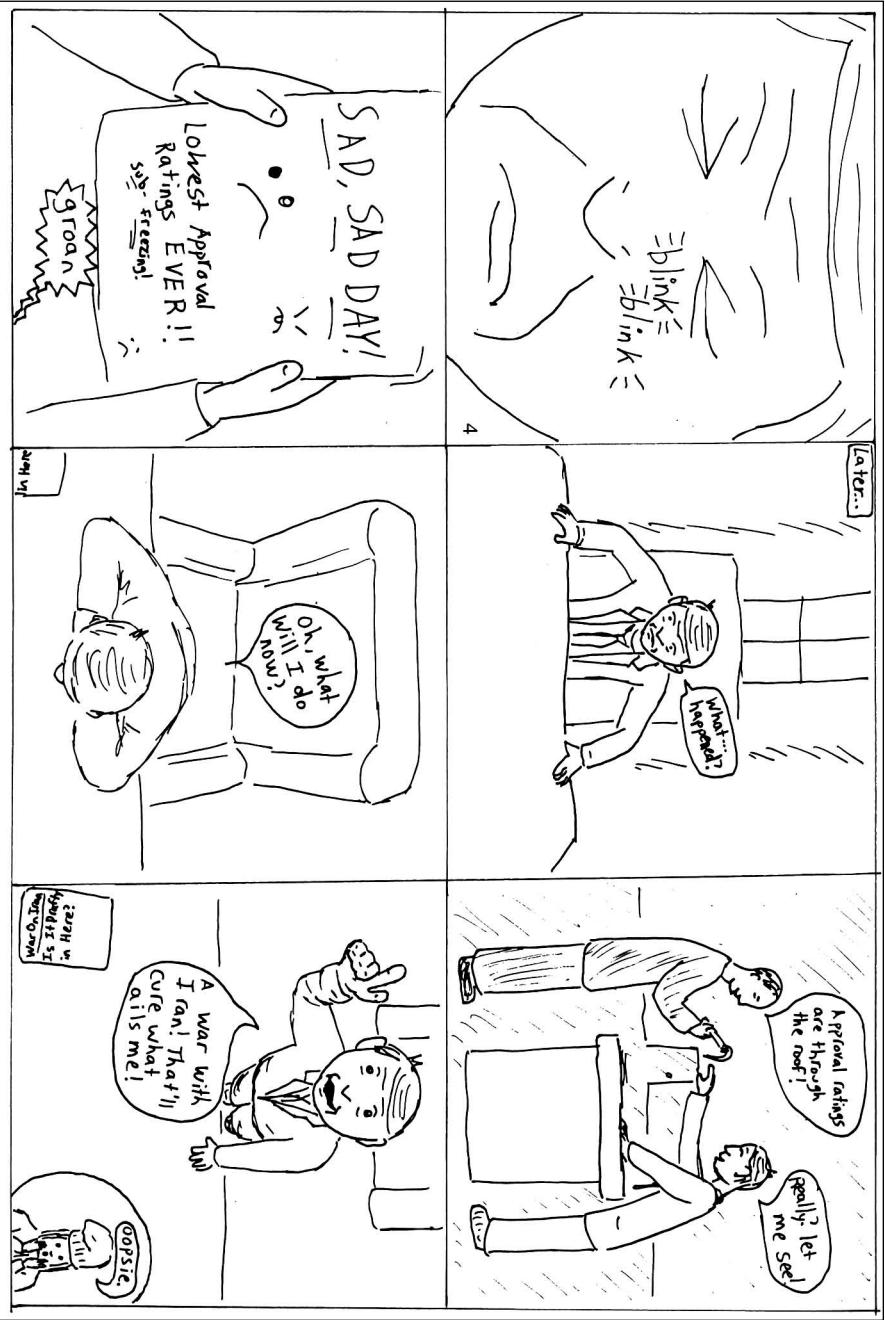
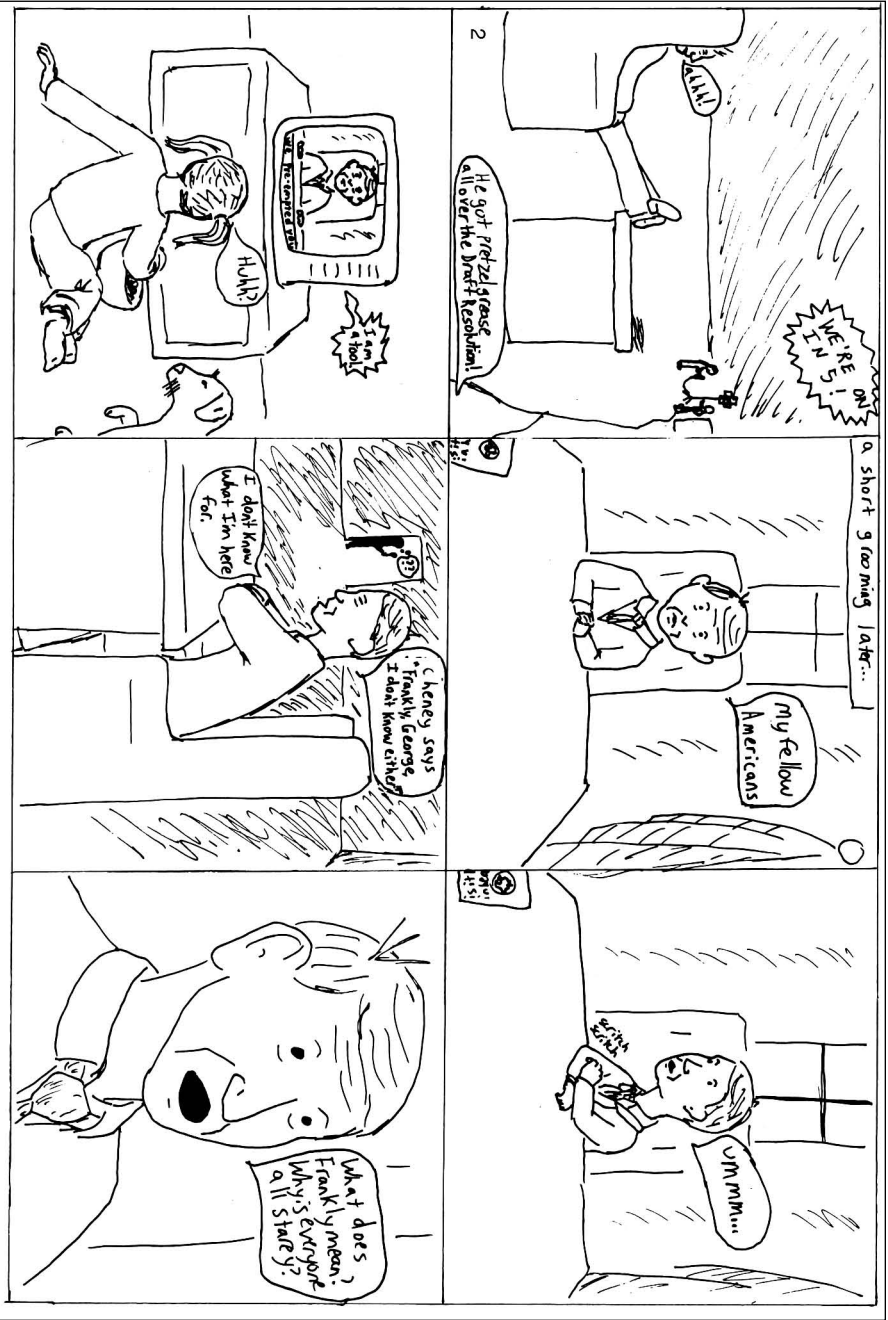
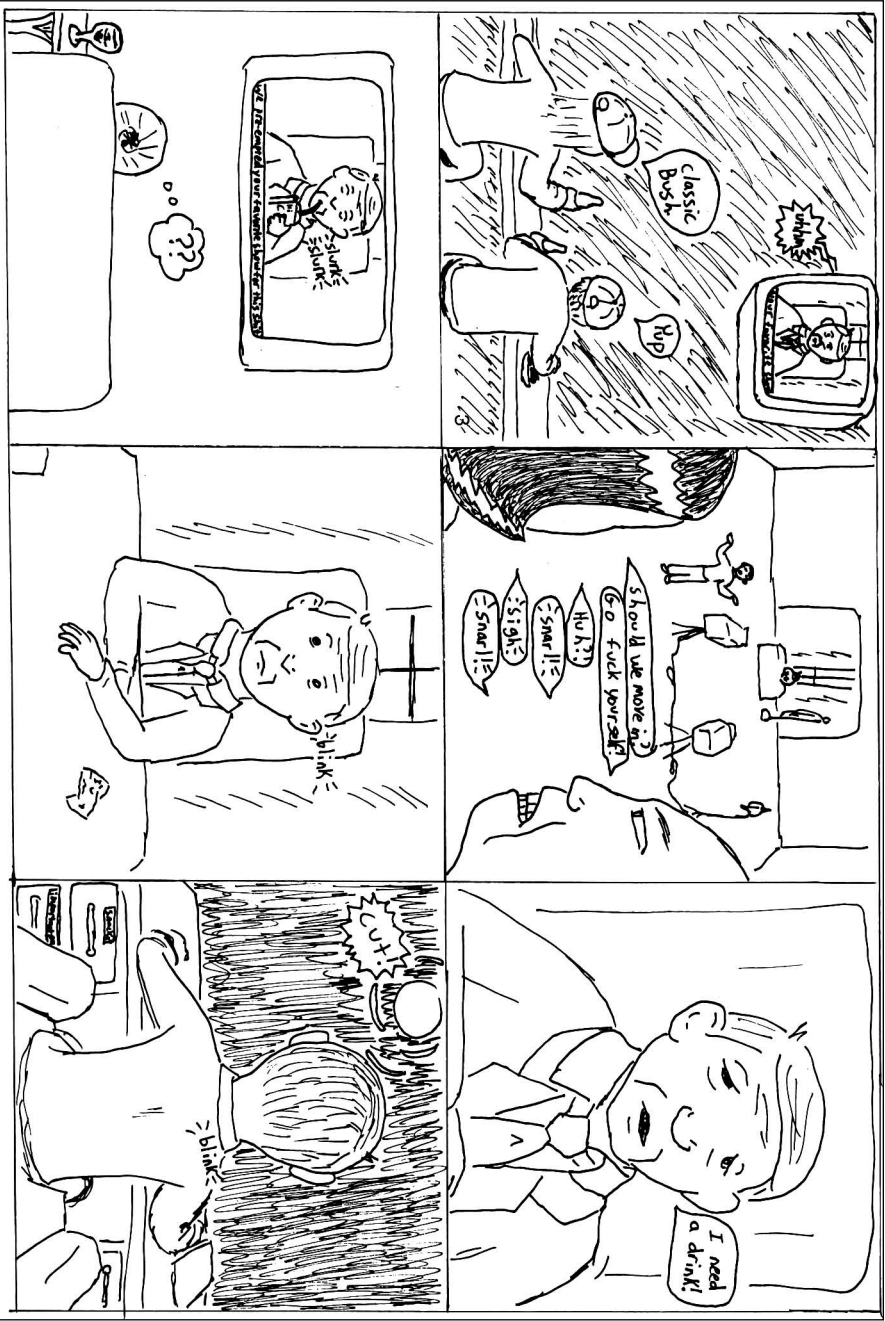
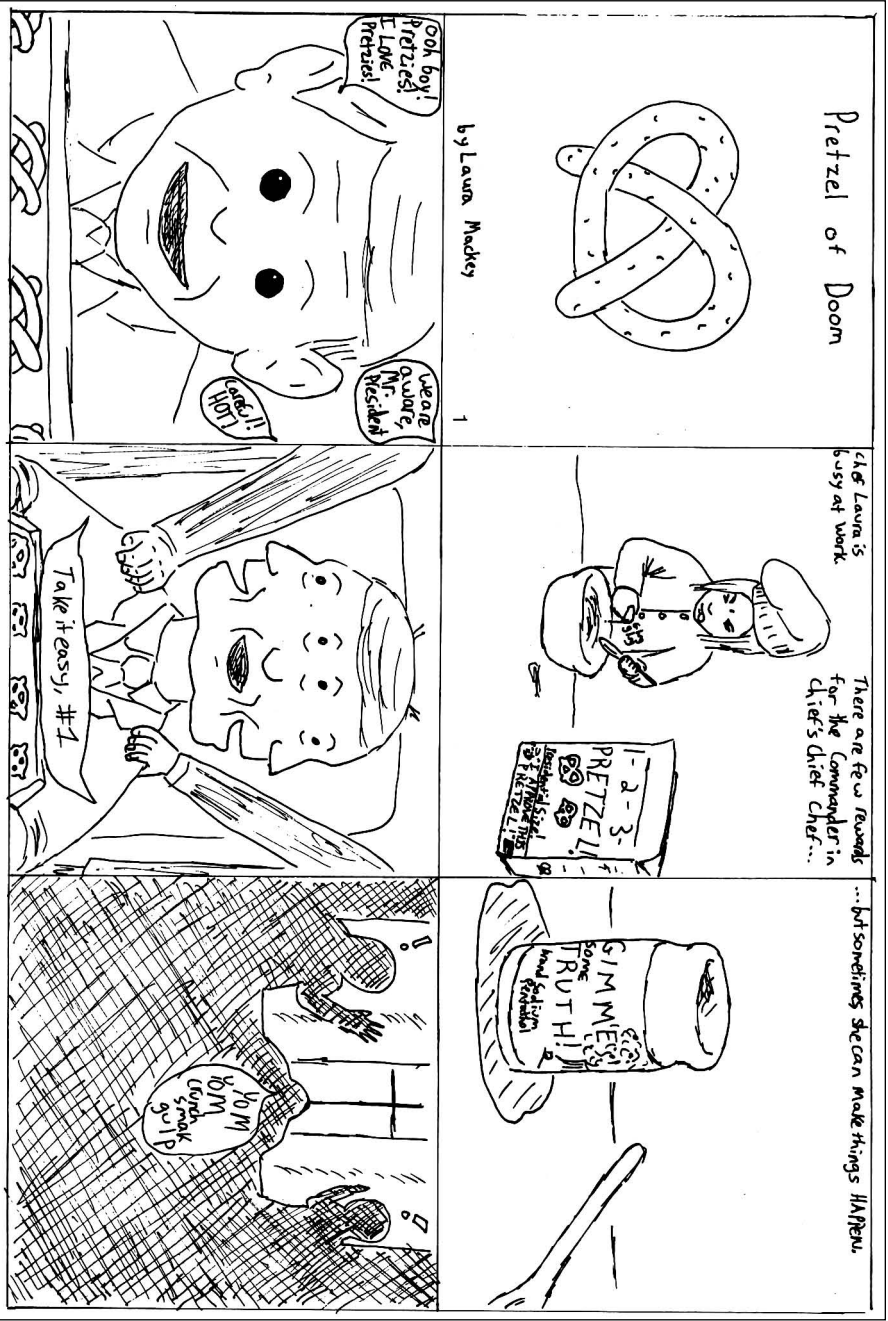
Connie Jenkins and Peter Phillips read names of the dead at the From Every Village Green—Not One More Death! Not One More Dollar!—Iraq war five-year commemoration and Chain of Concern at Paul Bunyan Park in Bangor on March 15, 2008. (Judy Rusk photo)

are inadequate to fix them. However, history has shown that lasting and meaningful change is simply achieved by average people working together. Although charismatic leaders are often inspirational and romantic symbols, their mythology can also be a paralyzing, intimidating and impossible standard to live up to. We need to remember that these symbolic figures are given a

platform by the "regular folks" making the phone calls, hanging the flyers, sending out the press releases, and going to meetings every week. These people have become my role models because, through them, I have discovered that it is both basic and empowering to be part of a movement working for the things I care about.

—Anna Sweeney

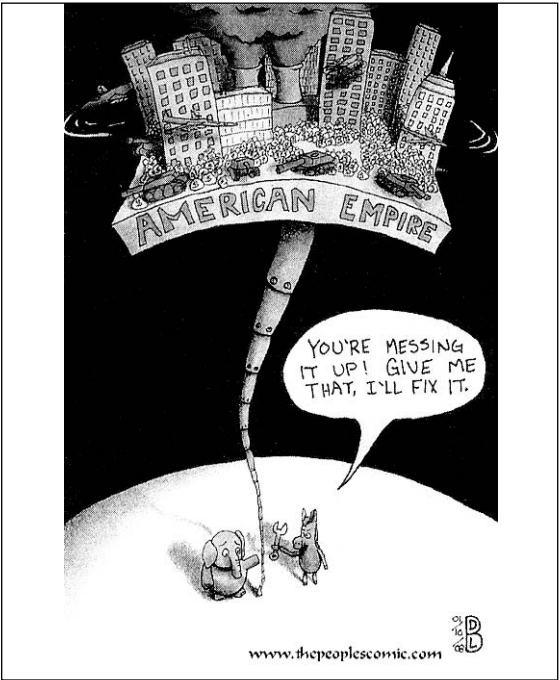




BREAKING THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM!

In an ideal democracy, a vibrant array of different voices, opinions, and political leanings would all have equal footing not only in the mainstream media, but in the voting system itself. In a two-party system two main political parties dominate elections from the local to national levels. The so called “spoiler affect” of third party candidates, epitomized by the 2000 presidential election, fosters the two-party system and the inherent bias in the media. The same spoiler affect is even present when trying to change platforms of a party from within (e.g. 2004: why vote for Kucinich when Dean has a better chance of beating Kerry?).

Dangers of a two-party system have become increasingly apparent when the supposed left-wing party concedes on many ideals and shifts to the center. Even in a tight race, why support a Democrat who will only perpetuate systems of imperialism and capitalistic greed? Are Democrats really an alternative when they vote for inflated military budgets at the expense of domestic programs, support corporate tax cuts and the role of lobbyists in Washington, have remained quiet or complicit in legislation abandoning human rights and freedoms of privacy, and are more worried about reelections than right choices.



The way to break the two-party system is not by throwing votes away on alternative party candidates, but to change the voting system itself. Our current plurality system of voting is essentially the person with the most votes win even if they don't get a true majority (50% or more). An alternative form of voting called Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) is the solution to break the two-party system.

| (Rank candidates in order of choice) | 1st Choice | 2nd Choice | 3rd Choice | 4th Choice | 5th Choice | 6th Choice |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Candidate A                          | 1          | 2          | 3          | 4          |            | 5          |
| Candidate B                          | 1          | 2          |            | 4          | 5          | 6          |
| Candidate C                          |            | 2          | 3          | 4          | 5          | 6          |
| Candidate D                          | 1          |            | 3          | 4          | 5          | 6          |
| Candidate E                          | 1          | 2          | 3          |            | 5          | 6          |
| Candidate F                          | 1          | 2          | 3          | 4          | 5          |            |

- IRV works as follows:
1. When voting you rank candidates from first to last in order of preference
  2. A first round counts ballots as one vote for your first choice candidate
  3. If a candidate receives a majority (50% or more) then they are the winner
  4. If no candidate receives a majority the last place candidate is eliminated
  5. For ballots with the eliminated candidate as their first choice, the next highest ranked candidate receives a vote. If a candidate still has not received a majority the next lowest candidate is eliminated until a winner is found.

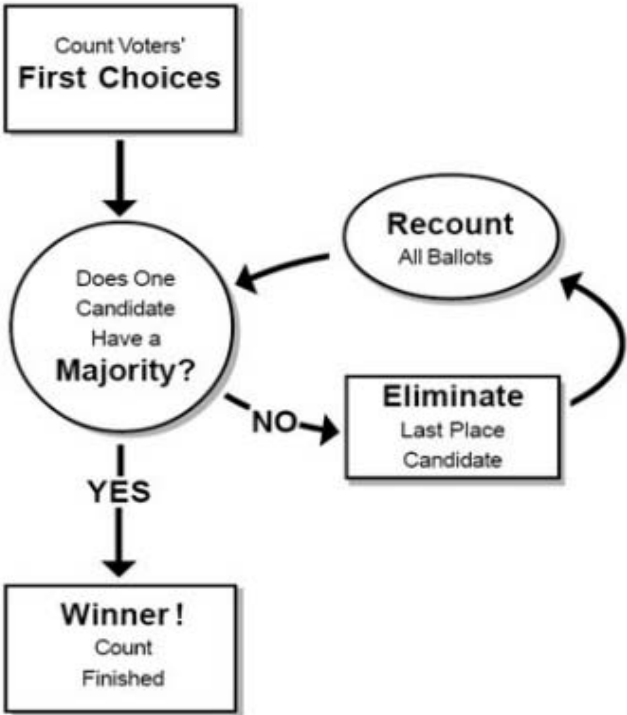
Let's see what would have happened in 2000 with IRV (we'll analyze just the popular vote, and ignore the immense problems with the Electoral College). First, I rank Nader as my number 1 candidate, then Gore as my number 2 candidate. As it turned out no candidate received a majority of the popular vote. The popular vote figures are Gore: 48.4%, Bush: 47.9%, and Nader: 2.7%. Nader is now eliminated. If people who voted for Nader listed Gore as their second choice, Gore receives Nader's votes in the second round of counting. This

gives Gore 51.1% and Bush 47.9%. Gore now has a majority and wins in 2000.

With instant runoff voting people would be able to vote for a candidate of their true choice, not the lesser of two evils. With IRV the media would pay more attention to alternative candidates as their support rises. This would have a dramatic effect on the two-party adapted mainstream media, as a wider variety of issues and opinions would be discussed.

Forms of instant runoff voting are currently in place in city elections of San Francisco, CA and Burlington, VT; presidential elections of Ireland; certain congressional elections in Australia, Fiji and Papua, New Guinea. So how do we make it a reality in the United States? The first step is education and awareness, leading to changes in local election practices on the municipal level. Any dramatic changes to the political system will be difficult; especially since IRV threatens the very power the Republican and Democratic Parties have held onto for so long. Yet, to make voting in elections a valuable tool in changing United States policy, a change in the voting system itself is critical.

—David Reid



## NEWS PLEASE! ALTERNATIVE NEWS MEDIA SOURCES

Whether or not the modern news corporations are giving us the whole story is no longer even debatable. Not only do CNN, FOX, and a roster of other multi-billion dollar networks, newspapers and news magazines leave out important facts, but sometimes, any facts at all are hard to come by. A mixture of shoddy journalism and corporate control can leave the average citizen of a democracy in a state of near-paralytic unawareness.

Luckily, plenty of other people are fed up too, and so there are plenty of other sources if you know where to look for them. Whether you're interested in fact-checking the thirty-second blurb you saw on ABC about war with Iran or learning about something besides American Idol and whether teeth whiteners actually work, the following list of websites is a great place to start!

It is important to note that none of these websites (which are listed in alphabetical order) are able to update as quickly as the big guys, and some are weekly or monthly magazines instead of streaming new sources, and, in a larger sense, it should also be noted that, just because these guys are saying it, doesn't mean it is right, either. Doing your research is always important; that's why Martin Wallace, a librarian at Fogler on the UMaine campus, who helped me compile this article (along with other members of MPAC), stressed a critical point: don't forget the library!

### **Altnet**

[www.altnet.org](http://www.altnet.org)

If anyone doesn't believe in the "liberal media" conspiracy, it's these folks. They make their objective clear: "The Challenge We Address: the right-wing media machine." Altnet's main objective seems to be get all of the glove-dropping in one place, with links to scores of articles,

commentaries, blogs and "special coverage" sections packed into the homepage. It's a little overwhelming at times, but never deterring. The presentation is still clean-cut and professional, and really, the homepage only appears busier than a major media outlet because there is simply more information and commentary out there than the big players are willing to share. Altnet is fueled by a mixture of advertising and reader support, and is extremely useful for fact-checking.

### **Black Agenda Report**

[www.blackagenda.com](http://www.blackagenda.com)

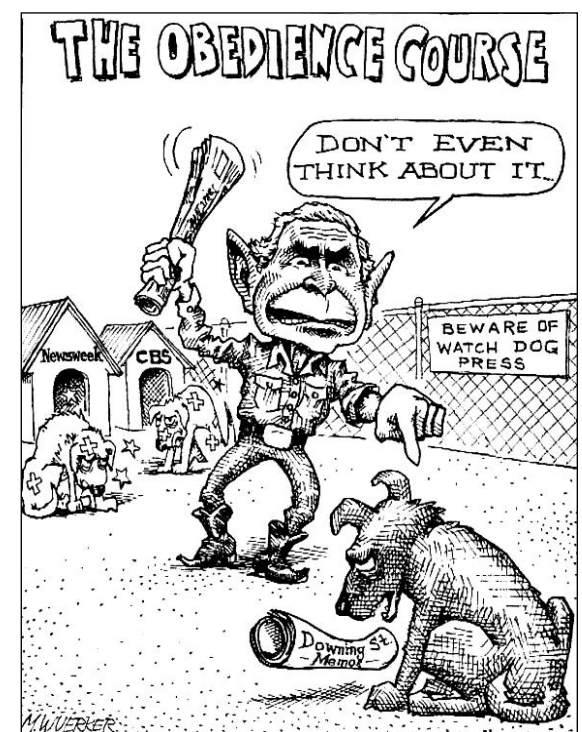
The Black Agenda Report is one of the many excellent specialty journals that are available on-line. It is the "journal of African-American political thought and action", but it also addresses other American racial issues, and is naturally peppered with news articles about the present presidential race. The articles are written primarily by BAR staff members but they also give voice to some independent artists and commentators. By its own account, BAR is run "on the cheap" and is always in need of donations, especially since it survives solely on donations and the advertising of activist groups and other independent media outlets.

### **CounterPunch**

[www.counterpunch.org](http://www.counterpunch.org)

When I first visited CounterPunch, I was admittedly excited. This came from seeing that Alexander Cockburn was one of the primary editors, a name I knew from his sarcastic and intelligent commentary essays in The Nation magazine and which sold me on the site. However, I was also a little disappointed to find that many of their articles were the exclusive providence of their newsletter, which I simply cannot afford (not that it's expensive; I'm cheap), and

that the overall user-friendliness of the site leaves something to be desired. Nevertheless, their cadre of independent journalists puts together some incredible articles, and their rigorous journalism is matched with equal parts independence, with all of their support stemming from donations and subscriptions. This is a good site if you're up for reading what equate to full-scale essays on the topics other aren't talking about, including some well-researched conspiracy theories.



### **Democracy Now!**

[www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)

This is the on-line home of the almost-famous Democracy Now! radio news program, hosted by Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez, which currently airs on over 650 different radio stations nationwide. Also known as "The War and Peace Report", the DN! website contains transcripts of all their major stories and interviews, and they do indeed conduct some major interviews. DN! recently hosted a debate between Alan Greenspan and Naomi Klein, as well as interviewing George McGovern, Wangari Maathai, and Jimmy Carter. DN! has a considerable following and influence, evidenced by Jeremy Scahill's exposé that Barack Obama would not rule out continuing to use Blackwater mercenaries in Iraq, prompting Hillary Clinton to make an immediate move to gain the upper hand on the issue. DN! survives on listener support and limited advertising, and the website is a great resource for those who don't have the chance to catch their show.

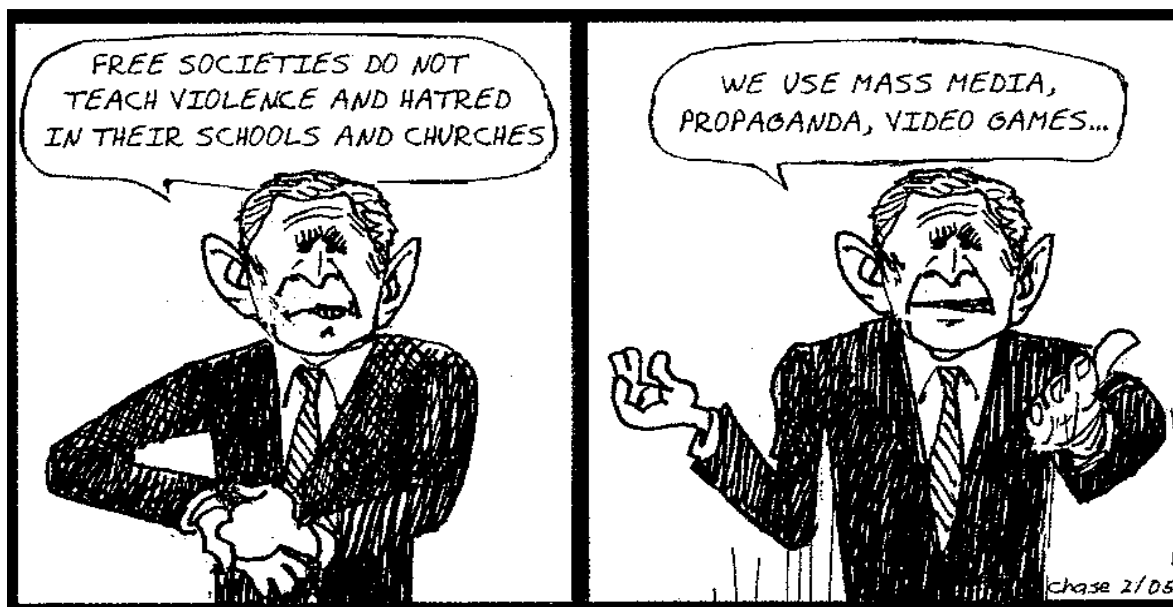
### **Independent Media Center**

[www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org)

I had been hearing about the Independent Media Center for a long time, especially because of their presence in Maine. However, I didn't start checking in







regularly until IMC volunteer reporter Brad Will was shot and killed by urban paramilitary plainclothes soldiers while reporting on the 2006 protests in Oaxaca, Mexico. It struck me personally, Brad being just a few years older than myself and just trying to get the news of oppression out to the world, and his death inspired me to start looking more closely at independent media in general. The IMC website is updated sporadically, but it's true value lies in its connection to other IMC outlets around the world. Their articles are regularly available in 8 different languages, and they have both print and radio outlets. Their articles are as much informational as catalyzing, and they continue their work entirely by means of donations. This is a good website for young, local activists who want to know where the action is.

**Information Clearing House**  
[www.informationclearinghouse.info](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info)

The Information Clearing House is just that: a giant depository of news. The website is filled with links to articles on other websites, the majority of which intend to expose the lies that lead to the Iraq War. The "Who and What" section is a concise description of the intention of the site's creator, namely, "my personal frustration and anger at the failure of traditional commercial media to inform the American public, especially as it relates to US foreign policy." While the website is disorganized and at points outdated, it is also run by one person strictly from donations and personal funds, and if you're looking for a concise source for links from around the internet, this may be the place for you.

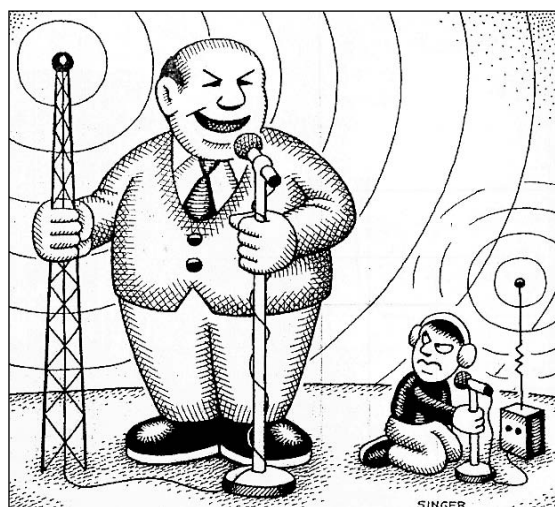
**Mother Jones**  
[www.motherjones.com](http://www.motherjones.com)

Defining itself as "Smart, Fearless Journalism", Mother Jones takes the questions that are brimming just below the surface of major news articles and, inexplicably, asks them. The result is a bi-monthly news magazine filled with articles by some of America's best political and social commentators. However, there are some perks to the website that the subscription journal simply cannot beat, the most important of which is Mother Jones' trio of blogs,

extensive archive, and daily photos and political cartoons. All of this combined with their top-notch writing and organization makes Mother Jones a must. Supported by the Foundation for National Progress, subscriptions and donations, Mother Jones is a great source for in-depth investigative journalism.

**The Narco News Bulletin**  
[www.narconews.com](http://www.narconews.com)

The Narco News Bulletin specializes in news about South America and particularly about issues surrounding the War on Drugs



and inter-American policy. The website is concise, the writing is decent, and the investigation is excellent. The keepers of this site are clearly driven by a staunch, anti-imperialist ideology, and the Bulletin is supported by the Fund for Authentic Journalism.

**The Nation**  
[www.thenation.com](http://www.thenation.com)

The Nation was one of the first independent media outlets I was ever introduced to, when I received a subscription as a Christmas gift. The Nation was radical and novel for me, and essentially detailed all the things that I had been thinking about and all the things that I still needed to know. The Nation was an inspiration, which may explain my annoyance of late with the nationally-recognized publication as their dramatically lopsided journalism has praised Obama while portraying Clinton as a fool and a monster. Barring whether any of those things are true, pandering and weak criticism is not what I

had come to expect from The Nation. However, despite all this, The Nation is still an excellent and popular publication and their on-line journal is up-to-speed on the latest news. Their presentation is well-made, and their writing, including their extensive literary reviews, is excellent. Supported by a mix of advertising, donations, and subscriptions, The Nation is a journal that delivers a weekly dose of well-aimed activist stimulus.

**New America Media**  
[news.newamericamedia.org](http://news.newamericamedia.org)

Another on-line journal with a mission, New America Media focuses on "expanding the news lens through ethnic media". Half of its articles come from its own writing staff, and the others come from a variety of sources, including smaller papers addressing minority groups and second-language publications. Not only does it break down its news by subject, like Truth Out, but it also breaks down the news by what ethnic group it may be affecting. Some choices include: African-American, European, Latino, and intersections. New America Media's voice has become particularly important lately in light of the race-charged presidential election and the continuing immigration debate. Originally founded by the Pacific News Network as a collaborative of over 3000 ethnic media outlets around the country, it is an excellent source not just for news media but also for activist and community outreach.

**The Progressive**  
[www.theprogressive.com](http://www.theprogressive.com)

The Progressive first came to my attention because of the number of articles that Howard Zinn had published in it. The guy is sort of a hero of mine, and as it turns out, he is a columnist for The Progressive, so it gets points in my book. The bent of The Progressive is standing "against militarism, the concentration of power in corporate hands, and the disenfranchisement of the citizenry." While many independent news outlets seem concerned with the first topic,



it is the second two that make The Progressive stand out. If it's articles alone don't attest to that, perhaps the presence of Howard Zinn and Wendell Berry or the McCarthyism Watch column might. The Progressive lives off of subscriptions to its monthly magazine and donations, and if you're looking for constructive criticism of the Man, this is where it's at.

### **Truth Out**

**[www.truthout.org](http://www.truthout.org)**

Truth Out is a 100% reader supported news medium that offers highly professional journalism at no charge. The articles are culled from a number of sources, but they always come with a fresh perspective and fresh facts. Often their role is simply to broadcast information that has already been made public but has never been distributed, and they do it without extra fluff or excess advertising. They also publish the photographs that are censored from the media and conduct video interviews with leading journalists and scholars. They break down their articles into several major topics of interest ("environment", "women", etc.) and they update often, usually more than once a day. This site is one of my personal favorites.

### **Upside Down World**

**[www.upsidedownworld.org](http://www.upsidedownworld.org)**

Central and South Americans are renowned for being more involved and more apt than United States citizens to protest against their governments if the governments overstep their bounds, but do we ever really hear about them unless blood flows or an American tourist is involved? Upside Down World attempts to remedy that by being the journal of activism and politics in Latin America. Looking long and hard at U.S. intervention via the War on Drugs and the War on Terror, UDW serves as a directory of current activist affairs happening due south of the States. Free of advertising, UDW is supported entirely by reader donations.

### **Z Magazine**

**[www.zcommunications.org/zmag](http://www.zcommunications.org/zmag)**

While Z Magazine is the focus here, Z Communications, the publication's umbrella organization, is a veritable dynamo of activist communication, complete with multimedia and an on-line social networking site for "sustainers". The magazine is a "radical publication" dedicated to social justice and peace activism, available in monthly installments. Two forms of subscription are available: regular, and low-income. If you are an activist and want to know the who, where, and why of popular activism and resistance around the country, Z magazine is a real eye-opener.

—Jeff Hake



**MAINE  
TAXPAYERS  
WILL PAY  
\$418.4  
MILLION  
FOR IRAQ  
OCCUPATION  
IN 2008**



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# MAC

Maine  
Peace  
Action  
Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

720  
Million  
Dollars



HOW  
WOULD YOU  
SPEND IT?

Based upon the work of Nobel Prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz and his colleague Linda Bilmes, the per day cost of the Iraq War for the first 4 years has been \$720 million.



American Friends  
Service Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

1,153,846  
Children with  
Free School  
Lunches



It costs \$424 to give a child free school lunches for a year. \$720 million could buy lunch for 1,153,846 kids.



American Friends  
Service Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

34,904  
Four-Year  
Scholarships  
for University  
Students



The average cost of a four-year state university is \$10,428. \$720 million could pay 34,904 students through college.



American Friends  
Service Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

95,364  
Head Start  
Places for  
Children



A year of Head Start costs \$7500. \$720 million could open 95,364 new slots.



American Friends  
Service Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

12,478  
Elementary  
School  
Teachers



An average school teacher's salary is \$19,200. \$720 million could put 12,478 new teachers in the classroom.



American Friends  
Service Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

163,525  
People with  
Healthcare



Health insurance for an adult costs \$4,405/year. \$720 million could cover 163,525 people.



American Friends  
Service Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

423,529  
Children with  
Healthcare



Health insurance for a child costs \$1,090/year. \$720 million could cover 423,529 kids.



American Friends  
Service Committee

ONE DAY  
OF THE  
IRAQ  
WAR

=

6,482  
Families with  
Homes



An affordable housing unit costs around \$11,061. \$720 million could buy 6,482 homes.



American Friends  
Service Committee

## PRESIDENTIAL SIGNING STATEMENTS

There has been a lot of controversy surrounding the use of Presidential Signing Statements by President Bush during his two terms in the White House. Bush supporters suggest that signing statements are nothing new and that many Presidents have used them in the past to show their concern for the constitutionality of the law they were signing. Detractors say that they circumvent the separation of powers outlined in the Constitution. Who is right? Well, the short answer is that they are both right. The long answer however shows some pretty significant differences between how previous Presidents used signing statements and how recent administrations have used them.

In 2006, a Task Force on Presidential Signing Statements and the Separation of Powers Doctrine was convened by the American Bar Association to investigate if the accusations made in the Boston Globe earlier that year regarding the Bush administration's use and abuse of signing statements had any factual basis. The task force consisted of liberal and conservative legal scholars, democrats and republicans. Their report gave many historical details and also made many recommendations for future signing statement use. There was a general statement against signing statement misuse and several recommendations made by the task force.

The general statement was the following:

Resolved, That the American Bar Association opposes, as contrary to the rule of law and our constitutional system of separation of powers, the issuance of presidential signing statements that claim the authority or state the intention to disregard or decline to enforce all or part of a law the President has signed, or to interpret such a law in a manner inconsistent with the clear intent of Congress; (page 1 of the task force's report)

What does misuse of signing statements entail? Presidential use of signing statements goes back to President Monroe. There is no mention of signing statements in the Constitution, but Monroe and many subsequent Presidents would occasionally attach a memorandum to a piece of legislation they were signing into law. Often, the statement was used to applaud the passing

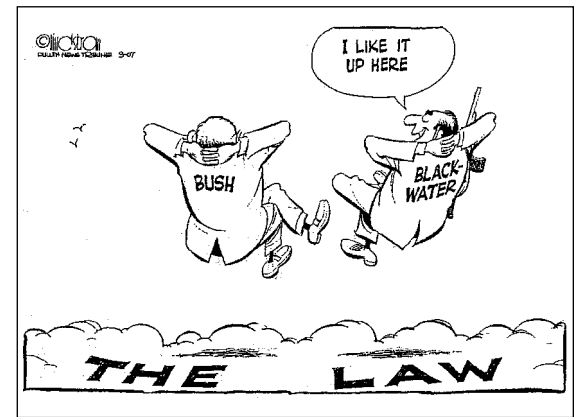
of the legislation, but occasionally they would be used as a platform to air concerns over the constitutionality of the law being signed. President Franklin Roosevelt signed a bill into law that he didn't like and then waited for it to be challenged and instructed the Attorney General to join the opposing team and he was successful in showing the unconstitutionality of the legislation. However, until it was challenged and shown to be unconstitutional, Roosevelt "faithfully executed" the law.

The real controversy over signing statements has its roots in the later part of the 20th century. Every President since, and including, Reagan has made extensive use of signing statements. The current Bush administration however, has outstripped previous administrations by quite a bit, not only in number of statements, but in how they are used and the power they assert with them.



So, what are the big differences in how Bush is using signing statements? First, the Bush administration is using a more cookie cutter method. While other Presidents wrote very specifically about the legislation they were questioning, the Bush administration has written a boilerplate statement that it applies to many bills that Bush signs into law, a sort of one size fits all end run around the Constitution. Here is the statement in question:

[The particular legislation] would be construed in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information, the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties. (report pages 16-17)



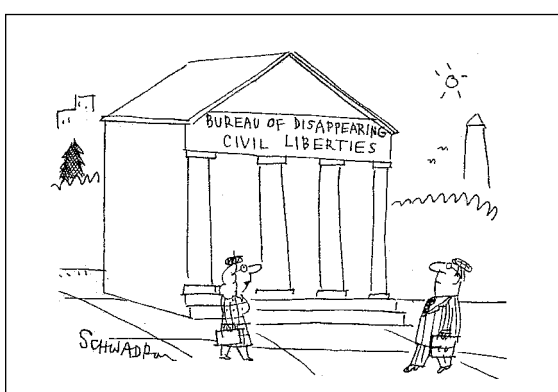
Bush is the first President to use such a boilerplate objection that does not cite specific issues of the particular legislation.

Second, President Bush claims the right to refuse to uphold laws he just signed. Previous Presidents have been less emphatic about this point. President Clinton, who also used signing statements to challenge the constitutionality of many pieces of legislation, was very clear that if his objection was not upheld by the courts, he would be required to uphold the law. President Bush seems to want to avoid the courts altogether.

So, what is wrong exactly with signing statements that claim the right of the President to not follow certain aspects of a particular legislation? The President claims that certain parts of certain legislation may impair his ability to perform his/her duty to faithfully execute the laws of the land. He/She has taken an oath to do this after all and no legislation should stand in his/her way. Now, certainly, we don't want the President to do anything unconstitutional (like refuse to execute a law).

We seem to be in a situation where the President believes he/she would be breaking the Constitution by upholding the law, and the Constitution says that the President must uphold the law or be in violation of the Constitution. What is the remedy? According to the constitution, the remedy is that the Supreme Court decides issues of constitutionality, not the President. That is one of the main purposes of the Supreme Court and a cornerstone of the Separation of Powers doctrine. The Constitution is very clear on this point.

So what can a president do if he/she does not agree with a law sent to him/her for





signature? The task force has some recommendations that keep within the bounds of the Constitution:

Further Resolved, That the American Bar Association urges the President, if he believes that any provision of a bill pending before Congress would be unconstitutional if enacted, to communicate such concerns to Congress prior to passage;

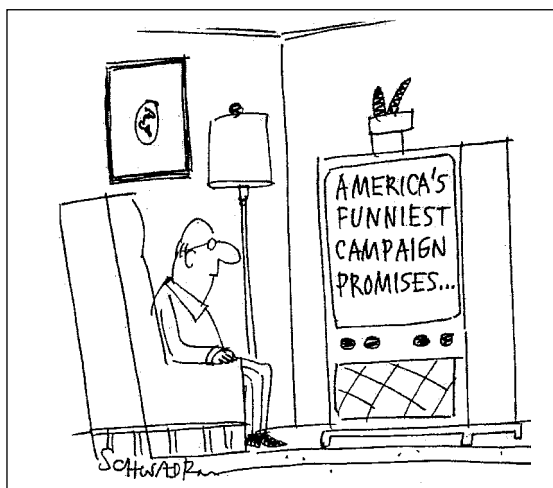
Further Resolved, That the American Bar Association urges the President to confine any signing statements to his views regarding the meaning, purpose and significance of bills presented by Congress, and if he believes that all or part of a bill is unconstitutional, to veto the bill in accordance with Article I, § 7 of the Constitution of the United States, which directs him to approve or disapprove each bill in its entirety; (task force report page 1)

These seem like reasonable requests to me. Communication or the constitutional power of the veto. If the law he/she is signing is so objectionable, why not veto it? Using signing statements to circumvent parts of a law is tantamount to a line-item veto, something the Supreme Court found unconstitutional in 1998 when it upheld a lower court's ruling that the Line Item Veto Act of 1996 was unconstitutional.



The constitution is fairly clear on this question as well. The President signs a bill into law or vetoes a bill. There is no provision for the President to sign portions of a bill or to veto portions of a bill. In a sense, the president is claiming the right to rewrite legislation, a duty assigned to the Congress in the Constitution, as well as interpreting that law, a duty assigned to the Supreme Court in the Constitution. This is a problem for anyone who believes in the separation of powers doctrine set forth by the framers of the constitution.

There is a certain Orwellian/ Catch 22 feel to a President who claims that upholding a law will restrict his/her ability to uphold the laws of the land. I could perhaps understand the dilemma better if



there were no direction given as for how the President should proceed in the face of legislation he/she finds constitutionally objectionable, but that is not the case. As we have outlined above, a President has a couple of options open to him/her if that sort of situation arises. Both options are in keeping with the Constitution, unlike the current method being used of refusing to uphold the law.

The task force did not stop at those recommendations. They anticipated future issues and recommended that Congress enact two pieces of legislation (which the President will hopefully follow). These pieces of legislation would require the President to promptly submit to Congress an official copy of all signing statements. In addition, if the President states in these signing statements that he/she will disregard or refuse to uphold a portion of the legislation, he/she must submit to Congress the legal reasoning. The statements must also be readily available in a public database.

Furthermore, the task force urged Congress to enact legislation allowing the President, Congress, or other entities or individuals, to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court, a process called Judicial Review, to the extent permissible by the Constitution. After all, what institution is better suited to advise as to the constitutionality of a piece of legislation than the Court? Granted, this could be a tricky legal area and caution should be used, but this is certainly more in keeping with the Separation of Powers doctrine than just



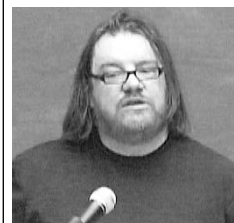
saying you will not uphold the law that you just signed into law.

The overwhelming trend since the Reagan years is towards increased use of Presidential signing statements to challenge portions of laws that the President does not agree with. Reagan, Bush I, Clinton and Bush II have all used them. There has also been a more dangerous trend to use them as a means of circumventing the processes and separation of powers outlined quite clearly in the Constitution. This is the trend that the citizens of this country should be aware of and outraged by. These actions are the exact types of actions the Constitution was designed to prevent. But the Constitution is nothing without the actions of an informed public. The attempts by the Executive branch to expand its powers beyond those outlined in the Constitution cannot go unchallenged. Congress, thus far, has been unwilling to stand up to this power grab. If they won't do it, we have to.

—Jeff Lowell



**Talks by SINAN ANTOON are available at <http://peacecast.us>**



Iraqi-born poet, novelist, and translator Sinan Antoon gave two talks at the University of Maine on April 3, 2008:

**12:30 "The Destruction of the Modern State of Iraq"**

**7:00 "Debris and Diaspora: Iraqi Culture Today"**

These are gripping talks that paint a devastating picture of what has happened to Iraq and its people. The tragedy of Iraq hits home for Sinan. It once was a country with great potential that has been eviscerated by America and its "student," Saddam Hussein. It is rare in America to see Iraq from an Iraqi point of view. Sinan Antoon helps us do that. Highly recommended.

**SINAN ANTOON** studied English literature at Baghdad University before moving to the United States after the 1991 Gulf War. He did his graduate studies at Georgetown and Harvard where he earned a doctorate in Arabic literature.

Antoon is maker of the 2004 documentary film, *About Baghdad*, about the lives of Iraqis in a post-Saddam occupied Iraq. Antoon currently is an Assistant Professor at New York University.

## 60 YEARS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION OF MAHATMA GANDHI: THE RELEVANCE OF GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY IN TODAY'S WORLD

In major polls done at the end of the last millennium, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as Mahatma ("Great Soul") Gandhi, was rated the world's most admired or one of the most admired human beings of the twentieth century. At the same time, both during his lifetime and in terms of his continuing legacy and influence, Gandhi was and remains very controversial, even in India. My position is that Gandhi's philosophy—when approached selectively, interpreted creatively, often reformulated, and integrated with complementary non-Gandhian approaches—is challenging, relevant, and desperately needed in confronting the most pressing crises of the twenty-first century.

At the time of his death on 30 January 1948, Gandhi was feeling deep despair about recent developments, felt largely

Mahatma, and then returned to their anti-Gandhian values, priorities, and goals. By the 1990s, I found that influential Indians felt no need even to pay lip-service to the Mahatma; they could safely ignore him as completely irrelevant or they could openly attack him as an enemy of Hindutva (Hindu religious nationalist) India, responsible for partition of India and the Kashmir crisis, favoring minority Muslims over Hindus, and presenting a philosophy that made Indians weak and noncompetitive. In recent years, I have noticed less hostility and more interest in and sympathy for Gandhi and his message.

However, the question remains whether Gandhi and his philosophy are completely dead or whether his example and message are relevant, even desperately needed, for

### THE MAN WHO CHANGED OUR WORLD

In every continent of the world, the Mahatma has admirers and acolytes who are keeping his legacy alive.

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Gandhi's philosophy is a powerful critique of ... oppressive and exploitative models of development.

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irrelevant and powerless, and was more controversial than ever. Although Gandhi's assassination turned him into a martyr and few openly celebrated his death, there is considerable evidence that many at the trial were sympathetic to assassin Nathuram Godse's arguments and defense.

When I first lived in India in 1963–1964, I found that approaches to Gandhiji (ji, "jee," is a suffix added to names or titles as a sign of respect, love, or awe) were often empty rituals: politicians, vice chancellors (the head of universities), and others wore their *khadi* (homespun cloth, made famous by Gandhi) and Gandhi caps, repeatedly uttered Gandhi slogans in the name of the

India and the world today. After all, Gandhi's assumptions, principles, and spiritual philosophical framework strike most modern thinkers as, at best, well-intentioned but naive and irrelevant or as, at worst, revealing dangerous, antimodern priorities and commitments.

#### Non-Gandhian Modern Thinking and Gandhi's Alternative

What is the nature of the non-Gandhian and anti-Gandhian modern world? Gandhi was trained as a barrister, but he rejected modern legal thinking that assumes a system of adversarial relations in which the objective is defeat the opponent in a win-

lose confrontation. Modern economic thinking assumes an anti-Gandhian view of the human being as separate means-ends calculating individual whose objective is to maximize one's own economic return. Modern political thinking assumes an anti-Gandhian orientation in which the purpose of politics is to win by raising huge amounts of money for political advantage, controlling and manipulating media images, acquiring and distributing wealth and power to supporters, and defeating opponents through personal attacks and any other means necessary to achieve one's end. To modern thinkers, Gandhi's approach is counterproductive in achieving results in today's world.

Gandhi embraces what he considers positive developments of modernity, such as respect for human reason, liberal emphasis on equality, tolerance, and freedom, and concern for individual human rights. However, Gandhi's philosophy is even more of a powerful critique of many features of the modern world, including its materialism, consumerism, oppressive and exploitative models of development, unethical and dehumanizing domestic and foreign policies of domination, and bureaucratic centralized state power.

Gandhi's philosophy offers challenges, valuable insights, and alternatives in its proposals about nonviolence, ego-construction and attachment, consumption, decentralization, community, appropriate technology, more harmonious relations with nature, more sustainable economic and political institutions and structures, and Gandhian socialism. It offers alternatives for personal and political transformation, ways to empathize and communicate with oppressed and exploited masses and indigenous cultures, and ways to resist modern and other forms of domination, hatred, violence, class exploitation, gender and caste and religious and political oppression.

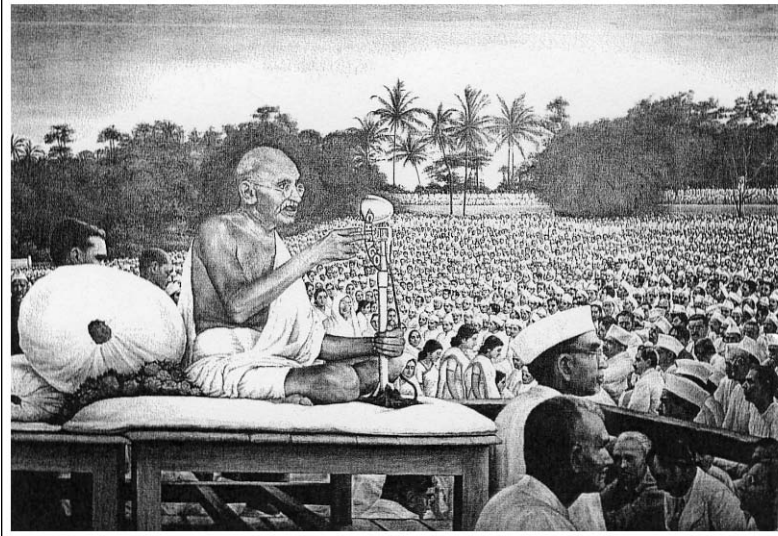
The relevance of Gandhi's philosophy can be illustrated by two of his major concerns that plague the United States, India, Iraq, the Middle East, the Sudan, and the entire world today: the widespread prevalence of violence and the widespread emergence of militant, intolerant religion expressing such violence.

# 60 YEARS LATER

Is the  
Mahatma's  
message still  
relevant?

All graphics in this article, except for the book cover, are taken from the January 2008 issue of *Swagat* (meaning "Welcome"), the domestic in-flight magazine of Air India.

'Character alone will have real effect on the masses.'



PHOTOGRAPH OF PAINTING AT SABARMATI ASHRAM BY RAJEEV RASTOGI

## Violence and Nonviolence

Gandhi, the world's most famous proponent of *ahimsa* or nonviolence, broadens and deepens the meaning of violence and makes discussions of religious and other violence much more relevant. Most of us restrict "violence" to overt physical violence: bombing, shooting, killing, torturing, beating up, rape, and bullying. We then claim that we believe in nonviolence and are opposed to violence. Gandhi's life and writings are replete with the need to intervene and deal with overt physical violence, but they represent a small part of total violence. In Gandhi's approach, most people who claim to be nonviolent and to believe in peace, including leading politicians and corporate executives, are in fact very violent.

In several of my past publications, in which I've formulated interpretations of Gandhi's philosophy, I've introduced two key concepts crucial for understanding violence, including religious violence, and the potential of nonviolence. First, violence is multidimensional. In addition to overt physical violence, Gandhi emphasizes inner violence. You can be filled with great hatred and thus be a very violent person. Your inner violence, expressed through feeling, thoughts, and intentions, makes you a violent hateful person, and this will be expressed in how you relate to yourself and to others. Gandhi also addresses religious and other forms of linguistic violence. Language can be used as a violent tool to control, dominate, intimidate, humiliate, and oppress others.

Gandhi, unlike traditional Indian philosophy and religion, focuses on economic violence. He usually equates violence with exploitation. We have violent economic relations of some people controlling capital and money, land, oil and other natural resources, technology, and media. They use economic power in asymmetrical unjust relations of domination to exploit and oppress others. Gandhi also addresses cultural violence, psychological violence, political violence, social violence, religious violence, and educational violence.

From earliest childhood, we are socialized in today's world in ways so that all of

these different dimensions of violence interact and mutually reinforce each other. We are thus socialized to accept religious and nonreligious violent modes of being in the world; violent ways of relating to ourselves, to others, and to nature as normal, rational, rewarded, according to human nature, or just unquestioning ways that things are.

The second concept in Gandhi's philosophy of violence and nonviolence is the violence of the status quo as expressed through structural violence. This usually unrecognized violence is part of our "normal" economic, political, cultural, ideological world; it's business as usual. Hundreds of millions of human beings suffer passively and silently. They do not actively resist or actively assert themselves because they live in fear, feel powerless, feel

solidarity with them, then I am guilty of complicity and perpetuate the structural violence of the status quo.

## Truth and Reality: the Interrelatedness and Unity of Life

Gandhi upholds an organic, holistic view emphasizing the interrelatedness of all of life. Truth, which he often equates with God, is that unifying ethical and spiritual force that allows us to engage in meaningful relations with other living beings, nature, and spiritual reality. True philosophy and religion must be grounded in *ahimsa* or nonviolence, which Gandhi often equates with love. Religious, economic, political, and other forms of violence lead to more violence and trap us in endless, causal, karmic cycles of violence. Religious and other forms of nonviolence and love break the cycles of violence. Violence not only is unethical since it leads to more violence, but it also violates Truth, God, and Reality. Such a view of Truth, God, and Reality not only expresses Gandhi's view of ultimate

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Gandhi also equated violence with exploitation. If economic power is wielded to perpetuate unjust relations, then violence is taking place, and remaining silent condones the violence.

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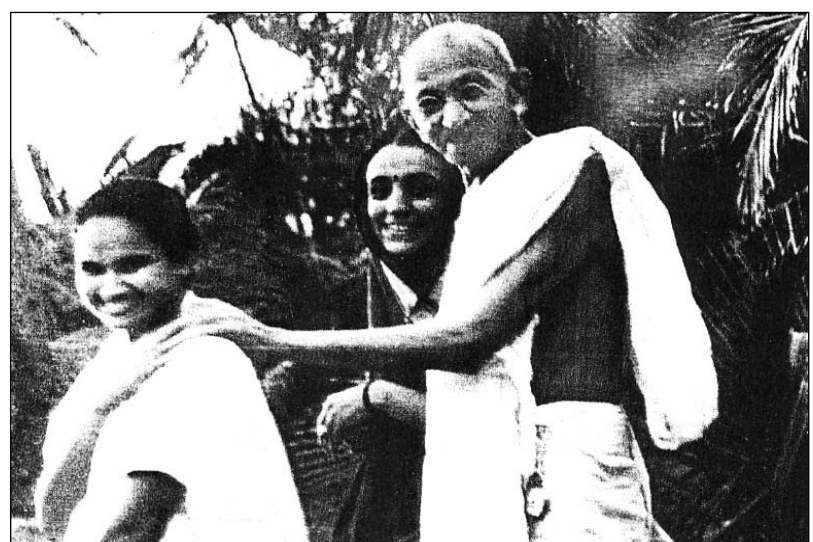
hopeless, and often accept their suffering as the result of some religious or secular justification. But there is no peace without justice. A seemingly passive, unjust, oppressive situation is in fact very violent.

Such structural violence is crucial for Gandhi's deeper analysis of economic, religious, and other forms of violence. For thousands of years, religions—with their religious, hierarchical, institutional arrangements—have provided ideological justifications for the violence of the status quo. If you have faith and suffer silently, "peacefully," without resistance and struggle, you'll go to heaven or you'll be reborn to a better karmic situation. Gandhi rejects all of this.

As a peace and justice activist, who identifies with the model of the *karma yogin* from his favorite text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Gandhi believes that inaction is an action. We must become involved in the world, fulfilling our ethical and social duties (our *dharma*), through selfless action, with no ego-attachment to results and dedicated to serving the needs of others who are suffering. Even if I do not directly profit from the violence, if others are suffering and I choose not to act in

reality, but it also provides ideals and values for how we should "realistically" live our lives in this world, since Gandhi views human lives as "experiments with truth" (the title of his *Autobiography*). Violence emphasizes essential differences, since the dehumanized other who is evil and is the target of my violence, is falsely viewed as fundamentally unlike me and my religion, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnic or other group.

Nonviolence and love, on the other hand, are not only ethical since they embrace positive values and intentions and lead to more nonviolent results, but they also are consistent with Truth, God, and Reality. Nonviolence, love, compassion, responses to suffering, and egoless service to meet the needs of others are the unifying



'To call women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman.'



forces that hold us together; that bring us into relations emphasizing the interrelatedness of life and the view that what unites or unifies us as part of the meaningful organic whole is more fundamental than what divides us.

### Absolute and Relative Truth

Gandhi makes a key distinction between Absolute Truth and relative truth. Gandhi upholds absolute ideals, such as Truth, God, Self or Soul, Nonviolence, Love, and Religion. However, he submits that human beings—including himself—as finite, limited, fallible beings, at most have “glimpses” of the Absolute. We are relative beings moving at best from one relative truth to greater relative truth. A major danger, seen throughout history and throughout the world today, is to turn our relative truths into the Absolute Truth. Anyone who then rejects our view of “the Truth” has false views, is a sinner, is evil, and must be opposed, even if this sometimes requires war and violence.

Even when we uphold absolute ideals of Nonviolence, we cannot avoid all unintentional violence. Gandhi even concedes examples when violence, even if not moral, is necessary; when there are no nonviolent alternatives and the violence is the most nonviolent intervention we have to prevent greater violence. However, we should never glorify such violence. Even when necessary, such violence is tragic, an indication of human failure, and we must work to change the conditions that gave rise to such violence.

We should uphold higher ethical and spiritual ideals and be proud of what is best in our relative formulations, but we should recognize that other people and other religions have their own relative truths and imperfect paths to the Absolute. This is the basis for Gandhi's famous nonexclusive, nonviolent tolerance, with respect for other ethical and religious positions, and which emphasizes legitimate diversity and pluralism grounded in an underlying interreligious and intercultural interrelatedness and unity. Indeed, for Gandhi, other religious and cultural paths have truths that we do not have, and we can even learn from them in developing our ethical and spiritual position.

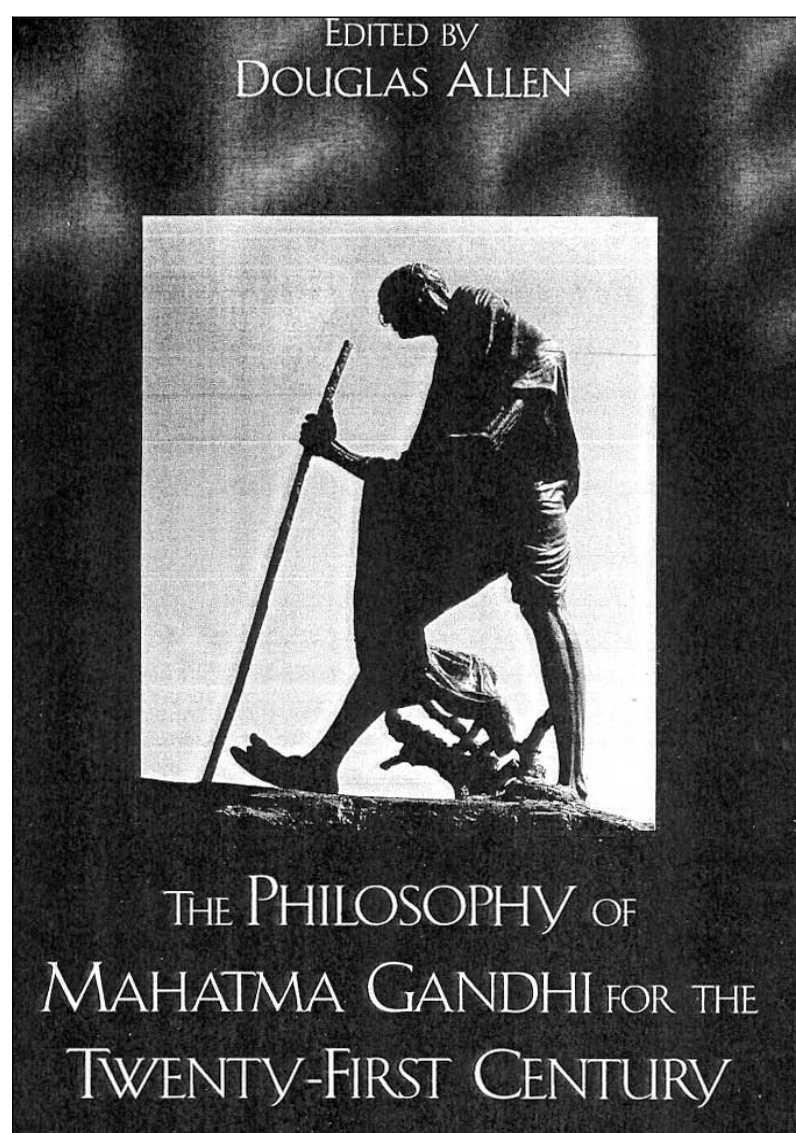
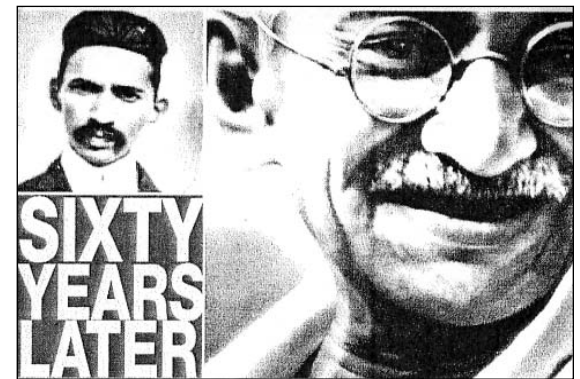
### Human Nature, Evolutionary Survival, and Gandhi's Relevance

Gandhi offers us a profound view of human and cosmic evolution that provides guidance when dealing with religion, violence, and other major concerns in today's world. We have a higher nature and a lower nature: values, motives, and actions that represent our brute nature and others that bring out our ethical and spiritual potential. History books and media falsely emphasize that the ends justify the means, that might makes right, and that survival of the fittest is determined by economic and violent power. Gandhi disagrees and submits that human beings have developed and survived because of our capacity to be touched by and respond to the suffering and the needs of others; to live lives full of compassion and loving kindness; and to

base our lives on ethical and spiritual principles and actions committed to Truth and Nonviolence. We can tap into our brute nature, our worst nature, and thus become part of the problem of so much violence, hatred, intolerance, injustice, religious conflict, and war. Or we can tap into our best nature, dimensions of our higher ethical and spiritual development.

Gandhi's philosophy, his life and his message, have much to contribute in our efforts to deal with violence, war, oppression, exploitation, injustice, and environmental destruction and in our efforts to formulate qualitatively different, positive alternatives and solutions to the unjust, multidimensional, violent status quo. It is this sense of philosophical and practical urgency and significance of such contemporary crises that provides much of the renewed interest in examining the continuing relevance of Gandhi's philosophy.

—Doug Allen



New book published in April 2008 in paperback and hardcover editions by Lexington Books.

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The Maine Peace Action Committee has its general meeting every Tuesday at 4:00 PM in the Virtue Room of the Maples Building on the University of Maine Campus. Meeting times and dates may change. MPAC often has subcommittees working on topics of special interest to current members. MPAC also organizes film series, speakers, teach-ins, workshops, concerts, reading groups, demonstrations, and other peace and justice actions. For more information on MPAC, call 581-3860. If you are interested in peace education and activism, please join us. <http://www.umaine.edu/mpac/>

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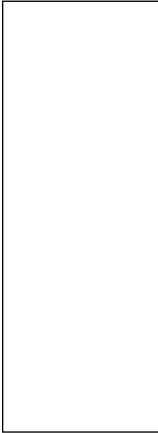
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# Bring the Troops Home



Without justice, there can be no peace. He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.

—Dr. Martin Luther King